

The Complete Radiology Residency Application Checklist

Your step-by-step guide to building a competitive radiology application



Timeline Overview

Pre-Clinical Years (MS1-MS2)

Goal: Explore radiology and build foundational knowledge

Timeline Checklist:

MS1 Year:

- ☐ Join radiology interest group or start one at your school
- ☐ Attend at least 3 radiology lectures or grand rounds
- ☐ Shadow radiologists in 2+ different subspecialties (4+ hours each)
- ☐ Excel in anatomy coursework (crucial for imaging interpretation)
- ☐ Begin learning basic imaging interpretation through online platforms
- ☐ Connect with 1-2 radiology faculty members for informal mentorship
- ☐ Attend 1 radiology conference if possible (student rates available)

Summer After MS1:

- ☐ Complete radiology research project or case report
- ☐ Intensive imaging interpretation skill development (20+ hours)
- ☐ Extended shadowing experience (20+ hours total)
- ☐ Attend radiology interest group planning meetings

MS2 Year:

- ☐ Take leadership role in radiology interest group
- ☐ Continue research project toward publication/presentation
- ☐ Develop competency in basic imaging interpretation
- ☐ Maintain relationships with radiology mentors
- ☐ Excel in pathology and clinical correlation courses
- ☐ Plan Step 1 study with radiology correlation focus

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Summer After MS2:

- ☐ Complete research projects for presentation at conferences
 - ☐ Submit abstracts to radiology conferences
 - ☐ Begin planning away rotations and target programs
 - ☐ Intensive skill development before clinical years
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Clinical Years (MS3-MS4)

Goal: Demonstrate competency and build competitive application

MS3 Year Checklist:

- ☐ Schedule radiology elective as early as possible
- ☐ Excel in core clerkships (target: Honors in IM and Surgery)
- ☐ Maintain research productivity and submit publications
- ☐ Network with residents and faculty during all rotations
- ☐ Develop strong clinical presentation skills
- ☐ Take Step 2 CK by spring (target: 260+)
- ☐ Secure 2-3 strong letters of recommendation from radiologists

Summer Before MS4:

- ☐ Complete 2-4 away rotations at target programs
- ☐ Finalize research projects and submit for publication
- ☐ Draft personal statement with radiology-specific focus
- ☐ Request letters of recommendation with 2+ months notice
- ☐ Complete ERAS application materials

MS4 Application Year:

- ☐ Submit ERAS application by mid-September
 - ☐ Prepare for interviews with mock sessions
 - ☐ Research each program thoroughly before interviews
 - ☐ Submit rank order list by February deadline
 - ☐ Prepare backup plans (preliminary year, research year options)
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Academic Requirements Checklist

USMLE Score Targets

- ☐ **Step 1:** 245+ (competitive programs require 250+)
- ☐ **Step 2 CK:** 260+ (increasingly important for radiology)
- ☐ **Step 2 CS:** Pass (if applicable)
- ☐ Take Step 2 CK by spring of MS4 year for early score reporting

Clerkship Performance Goals

- ☐ **Internal Medicine:** Honors (essential for radiology)
- ☐ **Surgery:** Honors (demonstrates procedural aptitude)
- ☐ **Radiology Elective:** Outstanding performance and strong letter
- ☐ **Overall GPA:** Top quartile of class
- ☐ **Clinical Skills:** Excel in patient presentation and reasoning

Research Requirements

- ☐ **Publications:** 3-8 peer-reviewed papers (radiology-focused preferred)
- ☐ **Presentations:** 2-5 conference abstracts/presentations
- ☐ **Case Reports:** 1-3 educational cases with radiology correlation
- ☐ **Quality Projects:** 1-2 quality improvement or educational initiatives
- ☐ **Authorship:** First author on at least 1-2 significant publications

Research and Scholarly Activity Checklist

Research Project Planning

- ☐ Identify radiology faculty mentor by end of MS1 year
- ☐ Define project scope and timeline with clear deliverables
- ☐ Obtain IRB approval if required for human subjects research
- ☐ Set publication and presentation goals with mentor
- ☐ Plan 2-3 related projects to build research portfolio

Publication Strategy

- ☐ **Case Reports:** Start with interesting cases for quick publications
- ☐ **Original Research:** Plan 1-2 substantial research projects
- ☐ **Review Articles:** Consider educational review papers
- ☐ **Conference Abstracts:** Submit to radiology society meetings
- ☐ **Peer Review:** Participate in journal review process if invited

Conference Presentation Goals

- ☐ **RSNA:** Submit abstracts to largest radiology conference
 - ☐ **Regional Meetings:** Present at local/regional radiology societies
 - ☐ **Medical Student Research:** Present at medical school research days
 - ☐ **Subspecialty Meetings:** Target specific subspecialty conferences
 - ☐ **Poster Sessions:** Prepare professional posters and presentations
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Professional Development Checklist

Networking and Mentorship

- ☐ Develop relationships with 3+ radiology faculty mentors
- ☐ Connect with radiology residents for program insights
- ☐ Attend radiology department social events and meetings
- ☐ Join professional societies (RSNA, ACR student memberships)
- ☐ Maintain contact with away rotation faculty and residents

Leadership and Service

- ☐ **Interest Group Leadership:** President, VP, or committee chair roles
- ☐ **Research Coordination:** Lead multi-institutional projects
- ☐ **Teaching Activities:** Tutor other students in imaging/anatomy
- ☐ **Community Service:** Healthcare-related volunteer work
- ☐ **Professional Committees:** Student representative roles

Skills Development

- ☐ **Imaging Interpretation:** Competency across all major modalities
 - ☐ **Medical Writing:** Strong publication and presentation skills
 - ☐ **Teaching Ability:** Experience educating peers and junior students
 - ☐ **Communication:** Excellent interaction with clinical colleagues
 - ☐ **Technology:** Proficiency with PACS and imaging software
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Application Materials Checklist

ERAS Application Components

- ☐ **Personal Statement:** Radiology-specific, compelling narrative (1 page)
- ☐ **CV:** Comprehensive academic and research accomplishments
- ☐ **Letters of Recommendation:** 3-4 strong letters (2+ from radiologists)

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- ☐ **Medical School Transcript:** Verified and uploaded
- ☐ **USMLE Scores:** All required examinations completed and reported

Personal Statement Essentials

- ☐ **Opening Hook:** Specific moment that sparked radiology interest
- ☐ **Interest Development:** How you explored and confirmed specialty choice
- ☐ **Relevant Experience:** Research, clinical, and leadership examples
- ☐ **Future Goals:** What you hope to contribute to radiology
- ☐ **Program Fit:** Why specific programs appeal to you
- ☐ **Professional Writing:** Error-free, compelling narrative

Letters of Recommendation Strategy

- ☐ **Radiology Faculty:** 2-3 letters from radiologists who know your work
- ☐ **Clinical Faculty:** 1 letter from excellent clerkship performance
- ☐ **Research Mentor:** 1 letter from substantial research collaboration
- ☐ **Timeline:** Request letters 2+ months before deadline
- ☐ **Materials:** Provide CV, personal statement, and program list



Away Rotation Planning Checklist

Program Selection Strategy

- ☐ **Target Programs:** 15-20 programs based on competitiveness and fit
- ☐ **Geographic Strategy:** Consider location preferences and visa needs
- ☐ **Program Research:** Understand culture, strengths, and opportunities
- ☐ **Away Rotations:** 2-4 rotations at top choice programs
- ☐ **Application Strategy:** Apply broadly but strategically

Away Rotation Preparation

- ☐ **Schedule Early:** Book rotations 6+ months in advance
- ☐ **Housing Arrangements:** Secure affordable accommodation
- ☐ **Imaging Skills:** Arrive with competent interpretation ability
- ☐ **Program Knowledge:** Research faculty, residents, and culture
- ☐ **Professional Presentation:** Excellent performance and attitude

Away Rotation Excellence

- ☐ **Preparation:** Arrive with strong imaging interpretation skills
- ☐ **Engagement:** Show genuine interest and enthusiasm
- ☐ **Professionalism:** Excellent interactions with all team members

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- ☐ **Follow-up:** Thank you notes and appropriate continued contact
 - ☐ **Letters:** Request strong letters from rotation supervisors
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Financial Planning Checklist

Application Cost Budget

- ☐ **ERAS Fees:** \$99 + \$23 per program after 20 programs (~\$750 total)
- ☐ **Away Rotations:** \$2,000-5,000 per rotation (travel, housing, fees)
- ☐ **Interview Travel:** \$3,000-8,000 total (15-20 interviews)
- ☐ **Professional Attire:** \$500-1,000 for interview clothing
- ☐ **Board Prep:** \$500-1,000 for Step 2 CK preparation materials

Cost Reduction Strategies

- ☐ **School Resources:** Apply for medical school travel grants
 - ☐ **Student Housing:** Stay with current residents during interviews
 - ☐ **Group Travel:** Coordinate travel with other applicants
 - ☐ **Strategic Applications:** Apply to programs where you're competitive
 - ☐ **Early Booking:** Reserve flights and hotels early for better rates
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Application Strategy Checklist

Program List Development

- ☐ **Reach Programs:** 5-8 highly competitive programs
- ☐ **Target Programs:** 8-12 programs where you're competitive
- ☐ **Safety Programs:** 5-8 less competitive programs
- ☐ **Geographic Considerations:** Include programs in preferred locations
- ☐ **Total Applications:** 20-30 programs for most applicants

Competitiveness Assessment

- ☐ **Academic Metrics:** Compare your scores to program averages
- ☐ **Research Productivity:** Evaluate publications and presentations
- ☐ **Clinical Performance:** Assess clerkship grades and letters
- ☐ **Away Rotation Performance:** Consider rotation feedback
- ☐ **Program Connections:** Factor in networking and relationships

Special Circumstances Planning

- ☐ **IMG Considerations:** Higher score thresholds and visa planning
 - ☐ **Couples Match:** Coordinate applications with partner
 - ☐ **Geographic Limitations:** Plan for limited flexibility challenges
 - ☐ **Career Changes:** Address motivation and commitment clearly
 - ☐ **Research Years:** Consider gap year options if needed
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Month-by-Month MS4 Timeline

June-July (Before MS4)

- ☐ Complete away rotation applications
- ☐ Finalize research projects for publication
- ☐ Draft personal statement first version
- ☐ Request letters of recommendation
- ☐ Begin ERAS application preparation

August-September

- ☐ Complete ERAS application materials
- ☐ Submit applications by mid-September
- ☐ Continue away rotations and excel in performance
- ☐ Prepare for interview season
- ☐ Research programs thoroughly

October-December

- ☐ Interview season preparation and attendance
- ☐ Thank you notes after each interview
- ☐ Continued excellent performance on rotations
- ☐ Program ranking considerations
- ☐ Holiday break interview scheduling

January-February

- ☐ Complete final interviews
- ☐ Rank order list preparation and submission
- ☐ Consider backup plans if needed
- ☐ Maintain academic performance
- ☐ Prepare for Match Day

March-May

- ☐ Match Day and celebration or SOAP participation
 - ☐ Graduation preparation and board exam scheduling
 - ☐ Residency preparation and moving plans
 - ☐ Thank mentors and maintain relationships
 - ☐ Begin intern year preparation
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Final Application Checklist

Before Submission (September)

- ☐ Personal statement reviewed by 3+ people
- ☐ All ERAS components complete and proofread
- ☐ Letters of recommendation confirmed submitted
- ☐ Program list finalized and prioritized
- ☐ Application submitted by deadline

Interview Preparation

- ☐ Mock interview practice completed
- ☐ Professional attire purchased and fitted
- ☐ Travel arrangements confirmed
- ☐ Program research comprehensive
- ☐ Questions prepared for each program

Match Preparation

- ☐ Rank order list drafted and reviewed
 - ☐ Backup plans considered and prepared
 - ☐ Financial planning for moving and residency
 - ☐ Professional relationships maintained
 - ☐ Continued excellence in current responsibilities
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Success Metrics

Academic Benchmarks:

- Step 1: 245+ (250+ for competitive programs)
- Step 2 CK: 260+
- Class rank: Top quartile
- Clerkship honors: IM and Surgery minimum

Research Productivity:

- Publications: 3-8 peer-reviewed papers
- Presentations: 2-5 conference abstracts
- Leadership: Meaningful roles and responsibilities
- Impact: Quality over quantity focus

Professional Development:

- Imaging competency: Demonstrated interpretation skills
- Networking: Strong relationships with faculty and residents
- Leadership: Interest group and research coordination roles
- Service: Community involvement and professional contribution

This checklist is designed to be used throughout your medical school journey. Print it out, save it digitally, and check off items as you complete them. Remember: quality matters more than quantity in every category.

Want to accelerate your radiology preparation? [Start building imaging interpretation skills with RadClerk →](#)
